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➤EDITORIAL♦NOTES.◀

The Duty of the Theological Seminary in reference to Bible-Study.—The seminary is intended to fit men for active ministerial labor. Exactly that preparation is to be furnished which is needed for the work of the Gospel ministry. Of the many things needed by the man who is to preach, a true and clear and full knowledge of Bible-history, Bible-literature, Bible-thought stands *first*, after a renewed heart. Two statements about preaching are indisputable: (1) There is nothing outside of the Bible which the minister ought to preach; (2) There is nothing in the Bible which, as interpreted in connection with other Scripture, the minister ought not to preach.

The theological seminary is under obligation to furnish the student an opportunity for obtaining this knowledge. Nay, more; it is under obligation to require this knowledge of its students before graduation. If this be true, the responsibility imposed is a great one. To the seminary alone this work has been assigned. The college and university refuse to share any responsibility in the matter. The American university is ready to teach any language but the biblical languages; any history, but biblical history; any literature, but biblical literature. The ignorance of the Bible characteristic of the average applicant for entrance to the first year of the theological seminary is at once amazing and lamentable. Bible-instruction, if it is to be enjoyed, must be furnished the student while in the seminary. He has no opportunity for it before reaching the seminary. He has little courage to take hold of such work, if, when he leaves the seminary, he discovers that he has scarcely made a start.

It would seem true, therefore, that the theological seminary must, whatever else it may do,—(a) imbue young men with a deep interest in that book the study of which is to play so important a part in their subsequent lives; (b) carry them at least through the fundamentals of the several lines of work preparatory to or connected with the Bible; (c) teach them correct methods of Bible-study, and of Bible-interpretation; (d) store their minds with the largest possible amount and variety of Bible-information.

In the accomplishment of this purpose there ought to be included (1) the study of the Bible-languages, and so far as practicable, the cognate tongues; (2) the study of the history of the nations referred to in the Bible, together with the geography of these countries and their antiquities; (3) the study of the principles of textual and literary criticism, with the application of these principles to different portions of the sacred text; (4) the study of the principles of interpretation, and of the history of interpretation; (5) the study of the religious doctrines as developed in each book; (6) the study of the divine element in Scripture, of prophecy, of inspiration; (7) the study of the Bible as a whole, and of the different books as related to the whole; (8) the study of the special difficulties, moral, historical, and scientific, which present themselves to the Bible-student.

For the best work, or for even good work, the man called to preach cannot afford to be ignorant of these matters. The seminary, therefore, must furnish opportunities for their study, must require that their opportunities be improved. By so much as it falls short of doing this, it falls short of accomplishing its

mission. In so far as it succeeds in imparting this instruction, it is doing what it was originally intended to do. Nor is it to be supposed that, in these statements, sight has been lost of the fact that the seminary has other needs to supply, other duties to perform, and that neglect to perform any one of them would subject it to the same criticism. The seminary would fall short of accomplishing its purpose, if proper work were not done in Homiletics. The same is true of any one of the great theological departments. But in view of the absolute necessity of Bible-knowledge, the duty, so far as it relates to the study of the Bible, seems paramount to all others. The seminaries owe it to the cause of the religion whose interests they profess to serve, to the churches through whose instrumentality they have been founded, to the student for whose training they are held responsible, to make provision for the most thorough, the most extensive and the most comprehensive study possible of the Divine word, and to see to it that their students avail themselves of the opportunities offered.

Are the Results Accomplished by our Theological Seminaries Satisfactory?—

There is a growing belief that our theological seminaries do not, in every respect, accomplish the work for which they were intended. This thought is entertained as largely by those who have at heart the interests of the seminaries, as by those who are hostile to these; for it must be confessed that even in this nineteenth century there are some so-called Christians who do not believe in theological schools. The existence of this feeling furnishes no substantial reason why these institutions should be done away with; for even if the seminaries do not accomplish all that is expected of them, few men, outside of the class just mentioned, would have the hardihood to assert that they do not accomplish a great deal. The time has past when the right of the theological seminary to exist may reasonably be questioned. The denomination which fails to provide good schools for the training of those who are to be its ministers, does not and ought not to prosper. True, there was a time when the churches had no seminaries worth speaking of, and felt no need of them. So also there was a time when the world had no railroads, no telegraph-wires, and strange as it may now seem, felt no need of them. If, therefore, dissatisfaction exists in reference to the results accomplished, or if doubt is entertained as to the kind of work which is being done, the thing needed is investigation and discussion. If the charges made, the apprehensions felt are well-founded, let the evil be made known and corrected. If these charges have no basis, if these misgivings are purely imaginary, let it be shown that such is the case.

We believe that there is just ground for dissatisfaction in the matter. The theological seminaries are not doing for the churches, and for the students committed to their care by the churches, either what they ought to do, or what they might reasonably be expected to do. This sentiment is shared by a large number of men engaged in the work of theological education, and by a still larger number of men who, within a score or more of years, have passed from the theological seminary into the work of the ministry, only to learn that they are weak just where, as teachers of the Word, they were expected to be strong.

The seminaries, at least many of them, fall short in several particulars, but that, in reference to which there is most just ground for complaint, is the unsatisfactory character of the results achieved in the line of BIBLE-STUDY.